

Hiring for “Fit”: Understanding the What and How

Ask a hiring manager what they want and you will typically hear: “I want the best, most talented candidate for the job.” The answer is seemingly simple, but what does it really mean? How can you ensure that the candidate picked is indeed “the best”?

Hiring the best candidate means evaluating talent, skills, knowledge, experience, and, of course, prior performance. But, it is not only about that. It is also about behaviors, communications, energy, pace, vision, attention to detail, orientation to change and many, many other factors. So, how do you get the best, most talented candidate that also fits the role and the culture?

Understand the “What”

First, think of the job as a living, dynamic entity. As with people, each job has its own needs. Identify and understand what the position needs in terms of skills, knowledge, experience and other “technical” factors. This is the “what” of the job.

Next, think about the “How”

Now; look at the behaviors required for success. Think of this as the “how” of the job. To better paint the picture, you might ask yourself some of the following questions:

- What behaviors are required in this job to solve problems?
- Does the job require an assertive style? Or is it more reliant on structure and direction?
- How does this job interact with people? Does it require communications of an expressive and persuasive nature? Or, does it need a more logical and analytical approach?
- Does the position require a fast pace? Or, is it more focused on systematic approaches? Is attention to detail and procedures important? Or does the position require more vision and independence?

Combine the “What” and the “How”

Understanding the *what* and the *how* are critical to a successful hire. Hiring a person who is best at the what but way off base on the how will result in poor fit and ultimately be an unsuccessful hire.

Our recommendation? Ensure that hiring managers and every other stakeholder in the search process understands the distinction between the what and the how by developing a profile of each position. This profile needs to cover not only the technical aspects of the role, but also the behavioral and cultural requirements. Then, utilize proven behavior and motivation assessments, to better understand the behavioral tendencies and drivers of candidates for a position. When debriefing stakeholders involved in the interview process, carefully probe potential mis-matches between the what and the how. The intense focus on both will lead to better hires, better fit and better service to our clients.

For more information on Grant Alexander, BPI group’s talent acquisition group, please see www.grantalexanderus.com, or contact Jennifer Benskin, an expert on the what and the how at jbenskin@grantalexanderus.com.